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Security Council

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Letter dated 18 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The United States of America held the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December 2015. An assessment of the work of the Council has been prepared by the United States Mission to the United Nations, in consultation with the other members of the Security Council (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nikki **Haley**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 18 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of the United States of America (December 2015)

Introduction

During the month of December 2015, under the presidency of the United States of America, the Security Council adopted 10 resolutions and issued 3 presidential statements and 6 statements to the press. The Council held 32 meetings, consisting of 16 open briefings, 12 closed consultations, 2 private meetings with troop- and police-contributing countries and 2 open debates on international tribunals and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Africa

Burundi

During urgent consultations on Burundi under "Any other business" on 11 December, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Conflict Prevention, Jamal Benomar, briefed the Council on the recent escalation of violence in the country, following coordinated attacks on military bases on 11 December by unknown assailants. He informed the Council that, according to Government sources, 12 attackers were killed and 20 were arrested, and 5 soldiers were killed by unknown militants in the attacks. The Government responded with house-to-house searches in opposition neighbourhoods, creating a "vicious cycle of violence" that was both unpredictable and dangerous. He stressed that the crisis was still reversible and that it was still primarily a political one — although one with strong ethnic overtones. The Special Adviser reiterated his concerns that the dialogue was not advancing and described recent European Union discussions with Burundi under article 96 of its assistance agreement as "not encouraging". He warned that a cut in European Union assistance could have disastrous implications for the Burundian economy.

Council members stressed the importance of continued dialogue and engagement by the international community and many members were critical of the slow pace of the United Nations reaction to the situation. The Special Adviser replied that contingency planning was "complex" since the East African Standby Force was not operational, but was merely an "idea". Some members also called for stronger African Union participation and pressed for expedited contingency planning, while others claimed that the situation had calmed down. The Council agreed that the Security Council President, Ambassador Samantha Power, would démarche the Permanent Representative of Uganda about the state of the dialogue and meet with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs to review the progress on their contingency planning.

During a Security Council consultation on 16 December under "Any other business", Ambassador Power reported back to the Council on her conversation on 14 December with the Permanent Representative of Uganda, Ambassador Richard Nduhuura. She told Council members that, according to Ambassador Nduhuura, Burundi planned to send an envoy to Kampala on 17 or 18 December to meet with the President, Yoweri Museveni and they hoped to restart talks by 28 December. She also reported that the Defence Minister of Uganda, Crispus Kiyonga, had said he

was very committed but that additional financing was needed. On contingency planning, Ambassador Power reported that the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, had explained that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations contingency planning to fulfil the mandate in Security Council resolution 2248 (2015) was hindered by a lack of parameters for planning and the need to coordinate with the mediation led by the Department of Political Affairs. Most Council members reiterated the importance of contingency planning, though some cautioned that the Council should first determine if there was a threat to international peace and security before planning an operation. Some urged continued pressure on Uganda and Burundi to follow through with their commitment to restart dialogue. The Council agreed that the Council President, on behalf of the Security Council, should instruct the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to identify the likely scenarios, generate contingency plans for each one, and submit them to the Council immediately.

On 19 December the Council released a press statement to reiterate its concern about the continuing escalation of violence in Burundi, recalled the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolution condemning human rights violations and abuses in Burundi by all actors, welcomed the meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council of 17 December, called for urgent acceleration of the mediation efforts led by President Museveni, noted with interest the decision by the African Union Peace and Security Council to authorize the deployment of an African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi, and recalled the utmost importance of United Nations contingency planning.

Central African Republic

On 14 December, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, briefed the Council in closed consultations about the situation in the Central African Republic. The Under-Secretary-General warned that recent violence demonstrated that spoilers continued to undermine the transition and stressed the importance of taking action against those that sought to destabilize the Central African Republic. The Under-Secretary-General also warned that the Central African Republic military could play a destabilizing role and were viewed by many as a cause of the crisis. For these reasons, the Under-Secretary-General was concerned about calls to rearm the military and judged that rearming should be accompanied by security sector reform. The Special Representative reported that 70 per cent of polling stations were open and, in those areas, there was a 60 per cent voter turnout with 80 per cent of Central Africans voting for the constitutional referendum. There had been some problems with the late delivery of ballots and he detailed the efforts by the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to deal with these problems and promised that materials would be sent to contested areas with greater lead-time for presidential and legislative elections. He also reported that his team was looking into reports that Pakistani and Zambian troops did not prevent armed groups from interfering with the vote and would take appropriate action. He said that administrative issues and budgetary constraints had delayed the establishment of the special criminal court, and called upon donors to offer support to the court. He also described sexual exploitation and abuse as a constant challenge, largely due to troop-contributing countries who are serving with a United Nations mission for the first time, and said he was working to bring the issue out of the shadows.

Some Council members described the referendum on 13 December as a "turning point" for the Central African Republic and a positive sign for the upcoming presidential and legislative elections while others highlighted the fragility

of the situation and questioned the United Nations voting registration figures and highlighted concerns about low rates of voter registration among the predominantly Muslim refugee population. One member raised concerns about the call by the Minister of Defence for parallel governance structures in parts of the country. Members pushed for increased focus on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and expressed concern about rearming the military before advances in security sector reform. The Council agreed that quick action was needed to sanction spoilers and démarche countries that violated the travel ban. Members recalled the Secretary-General's promise to repatriate contingents in cases of documented patterns of sexual exploitation and abuse and some delegations requested that, in the next report to the Council, the Secretary-General include information on the status of outstanding sexual exploitation and abuse allegations. The Under-Secretary-General responded that the final decision about repatriation of the contingent from the Democratic Republic of the Congo rested with him, but that taking into account the "quite decent job in military terms" that the contingent from the Democratic Republic of the Congo was doing in MINUSCA, he would retain them, provided they met all of the requirements. He added that he could not leave a gap in Bambari, and that it would be difficult to find another contingent to replace the contingent from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Libya

The Council was briefed at an open meeting and in closed consultations on 11 December by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Martin Kobler, on the situation in Libya. He said that, in the face of the inability of the House of Representatives and the General National Congress to move forward with the formal endorsement of the outcomes of the Libyan political dialogue, he had convened a new round of the Libyan political dialogue to discuss the way forward. The Special Representative said that members of the Libyan political dialogue agreed that a political settlement should be reached on the basis of the Libyan Political Agreement negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL); agreed there would be no reopening of the text; decided to publicly announce that 16 December would be the target date for the signature; and called upon all political and security actors to create a conducive environment to enable a future Government of National Accord to assume its responsibilities in the Libyan capital without threat or intimidation. The Special Representative said that the High-level Ministerial Conference in Rome hosted by Italy and the United States on 13 December would provide an opportunity for the international community to speak with a strong and united voice in support of the Libyan Political Agreement. He assured all Libyans that "the door will always remain open for those who wish to join the road to peace". The Special Representative also stressed that the Council should express unified support for the political agreement, once signed. He also mentioned the threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to Libya and the wider region.

The Permanent Representative of Malaysia, Ramlan Bin Ibrahim, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011), reported on the work of the Committee from 15 July to 10 December 2015.

The Permanent Representative of Libya, Ibrahim Dabbashi, expressed hope that the agreement would be signed within the established time frame and that the Security Council would support its implementation. He called upon the international community to support the Libyan army to enable it to combat terrorists.

Council members expressed support for a political agreement, and the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland said

that it would propose a Council product for adoption soon after signature of the agreement. Following consultations, the Council President delivered elements to the press, noting that members of the Security Council welcomed the announcement of the target date of 16 December for the signature of the Libyan Political Agreement and that they underlined their support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations-facilitated, Libyan-led political process and the effort to reach a rapid agreement on an inclusive and representative Government of National Accord.

Sudan and South Sudan

The Council was briefed at an open meeting and in closed consultations on 2 December by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ellen Margrethe Løj on the situation in South Sudan and the mandate renewal for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). During the briefing, the Under-Secretary-General outlined the current situation regarding implementation of the peace process and reviewed the Secretary-General's recommendations (S/2015/899) in the light of the upcoming UNMISS mandate renewal. The Under-Secretary-General said that violations of the status-of-forces agreement must end and that the Government of South Sudan must make a strategic decision to support, rather than merely tolerate, the Mission. The Permanent Representative of South Sudan, Francis Deng, also spoke during the briefing. He said that the Government of South Sudan was ready to form the Transitional Government of National Unity, appreciated the efforts of the international community to alleviate human suffering in South Sudan and urged the United Nations to re-introduce capacity-building into its mandate.

In closed consultations following the open briefing, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported on fighting in Upper Nile State and Unity State and described tensions in Western Equatoria and Central Equatoria States in South Sudan. She noted that the Mission had deployed long-duration patrols in Unity State in fulfilment of its protection of civilians mandate. Many Council members agreed that although there had been some achievements in the implementation of the peace agreement, overall progress remained slow. Some members noted a lack of political will by the parties to move forward with implementation, others noted the need to consider root causes of the conflict. Council members discussed the upcoming mandate renewal and the Secretary-General's recommendations, including his recommendations on mandate length and troop strength.

On 15 December, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, briefed the Council on the status of the Court's work in Darfur. During the Council meeting, the Prosecutor criticized the Council's lack of response to Sudanese non-compliance with Council resolution 1593 (2005). She stressed that the victims of Darfur "deserve tangible justice" and warned that her office was "hampered by lack of resources". A number of Council members noted that the situation in Darfur remained largely unchanged, at least with regard to non-cooperation with the Court and ongoing violations and abuses. Some members remarked on possible ways to strengthen the Council's response to Sudanese non-compliance, urging that the Council consider non-compliance decisions referred to the Council under "Any other business" as a matter of course, and suggesting that, to improve the Council's current relationship with the Sudan, it should utilize all the tools at its disposal, including a possible visit to Darfur. Other Council members, with regard to the non-compliance decisions issued by the Court stressed that the Council's referral did not per se waive the immunity of State officials from criminal jurisdiction and noted the position of the African Union.

United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

On 8 December, the Security Council was briefed in closed consultations by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Abdoulaye Bathily, on the Secretary-General's report on UNOCA. The Special Representative noted that regional leaders had expressed their "frustration" with delayed elections in the Central African Republic during the recent summit of the Economic Community of Central African States. He emphasized that spoilers like François Bozizé and Noureddine Adam continued to pose problems and spoke out against countries that harbour them. On Burundi, the Special Representative noted the importance of a genuine dialogue and commented that the inter-Burundian dialogue should also include exiled opposition leaders. In the Republic of the Congo, the Special Representative said tensions were high and stressed the need for dialogue as elections approached. He noted that the people of Gabon needed to "discuss their future" and encouraged an inclusive dialogue. He asked the international community to expedite financial and logistical support to the region to combat Boko Haram. He also told Council members that efforts to combat the Lord's Resistance Army were insufficient, as the African Union Regional Task Force remained under-equipped and in need of basic supplies and assistance.

In response to questions from Council members, the Special Representative described elections as an important regional issue on which the Council needed to focus and described youth in the region as educated, aware and unwilling to accept the status quo. The Special Representative was very strong in his support for sanctions and the implementation of sanctions. He called trafficking in natural resources the "life blood" of armed groups and condemned countries that had not implemented United Nations sanctions, citing recent international travel by Noureddine Adam to Dubai and Uganda. He asked the Council to send a strong message that spoilers would not be allowed to derail elections. He described the mission to the Kafia Kingi region as an "opening" from the Sudanese, but warned that the area was a vast wilderness that was not fully controlled by the Government and he did not expect the African Union to easily locate Joseph Kony there.

Many Council members stressed the importance of financial and technical support for the region and others called for strong actions against those who support spoilers in the Central African Republic. One member provided a financial assessment of the threat posed by Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army, stressing that countries in the region felt severe financial impact due to the threat posed by armed groups. Other members highlighted the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the incursion of weapons and fugitives from the Sahel as concerns. Another member differentiated between poaching and trafficking done by armed groups and criminals and urged the Special Representative to focus on poaching by armed groups, rather than by petty criminals who engage in such crimes while some questioned whether the mandate of UNOCA could be restricted in such a manner.

Western Sahara

The Council held consultations on 8 December concerning Western Sahara that included briefings by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Christopher Ross, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and Head of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), Kim Bolduc. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General explained that, for progress to be made, each of the two parties — Morocco and the Frente Polisario — would have to show greater willingness to be flexible. Members of the Council welcomed the intensified efforts by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-

General, showed support for the United Nations-led process and agreed to make efforts to ensure that any upcoming trip of the Secretary-General to the region would be a success. To this end, the Personal Envoy emphasized that the Council must reinforce the message that Morocco and the Frente Polisario must move beyond their entrenched positions and show willingness to find a negotiated solution. The Special Representative reported that MINURSO personnel continued with their mission, despite challenges such as understaffing and inadequate access to all interlocutors. She emphasized that the security environment in the region was changing, which presented new challenges that required additional resources, such as an increase in medical and security staff. The speakers and Council members alike underscored that the status quo was not sustainable and progress should be made on the issue before the situation worsens. Some members asked that the issue of Western Sahara be treated with more transparency by the Council.

Europe

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

On 11 December, the Security Council held a briefing on Ukraine requested by Lithuania. The Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonović, the Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, John Ging, and the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan (via videoconference from Kiev) briefed the Council on the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine and the failure to fully implement the Minsk agreement. The Foreign Ministers of Lithuania and Ukraine also participated in the meeting. The four speakers cited rising numbers of ceasefire violations. The Council members stressed the importance of commitment to the Minsk process to resolve the conflict (see S/PV.7576).

Middle East

Afghanistan

On 21 December, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Nicholas Haysom, reported that "Afghanistan, as a sovereign nation confronting countless challenges, has made it through its first post-transition year, an achievement in itself". In this regularly scheduled quarterly Security Council open debate, the Special Representative emphasized that the most critical step towards realizing the country's potential was an agreement among Afghans to live together in peace and harmony. The Special Representative reported that UNAMA was focused on assisting the Afghan people in the peace process and stressed the importance of economic development and providing young Afghans with employment opportunities.

Council members highlighted the efforts by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to strengthen security, governance and economic activity. Members praised the Government's gains during the first year of the "transformation decade", as the country worked to strengthen its governance towards a sustainable State, while members also encouraged the international community to continue to provide assistance.

Iraq

At a meeting held on 8 December, requested by a Council member under "Any other business", the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenča, briefed Council members on reports that Turkey had deployed troops to the Ba'shiqah region in northern Iraq on 3 December. He gave a presentation of events surrounding the current dispute. One member questioned Turkey's commitment to the fight against ISIL and its motivations for deploying additional troops. There was a proposal for the Security Council to conclude consultations by having the President of the Council deliver press elements to the media, but this proposal was rejected by several members who thought such a move might escalate the dispute.

On 18 December, the Council met to address Turkish troop placement in northern Iraq. Jordan requested the meeting in response to a letter dated 11 December to the Security Council from the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, detailing Iraq's grievances with the Turkish action. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, detailed bilateral efforts to resolve the crisis, including recent high-level meetings of the two Governments in Baghdad. The Foreign Minister called the Turkish move a "serious violation" of its sovereignty and urged action by the Security Council. The Permanent Representative of Turkey, Yaşar Halit Çevik, defended Turkey's actions and challenged the ability of the Government of Iraq to defend Turkish military trainers in Iraq.

In closed consultations, all Council members encouraged de-escalation and a bilateral resolution to the crisis but also expressed support for Iraq's territorial sovereignty. The Council was united in expressing support for the fight against ISIL. Some Council members condemned the Turkish military incursion and called upon those with influence to convince Ankara to withdraw troops. Several delegations stressed that there was no need for a Security Council product.

Syrian Arab Republic

On 2 December, The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Kim Won-soo, briefed the Security Council on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and on outstanding chemical weapons issues concerning the Syrian Arab Republic. The Under-Secretary-General reported that since the Joint Investigative Mechanism began operations on 13 November it had initiated the process of analysing information assembled by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) fact-finding mission. He noted that the Joint Investigative Mechanism was staffed and gaining financial support and said that its leadership is committed to providing its first 90-day report, to be issued in February 2016. He stated that the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team had returned to The Hague after the conclusion of its eleventh visit to the Syrian Arab Republic with samples for analysis. He noted that the Team would conduct its twelfth visit to the country in the week of 7 December to determine which issues could be settled before an OPCW Executive Council meeting in March 2016, which issues would remain outstanding, and which, if any, obstacles persist in the Team's work. The Under-Secretary-General also informed the Council that a remaining hangar slated for destruction was, at the time, inaccessible owing to insecurity in the area. Several members commended the efficiency of the Office of Disarmament Affairs and OPCW in launching the Joint Investigative Mechanism. Most members reiterated that the use of chemical weapons constituted a serious violation of international law. Some Council members also emphasized the threat of terrorist use of chemical weapons.

On 18 December, prior to the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2254 (2015), the Secretary-General briefed the Security Council at a ministerial-level meeting about the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Describing the country as having fallen into ruins after five years of conflict, and noting the divisions within the Council during this time, the Secretary-General welcomed the proposed resolution as the first Council product to focus on the political path to resolving the crisis. He also said that the United Nations was prepared to carry out the two requests made of it by the International Syria Support Group: first, to convene formal negotiations between the Syrian Government and opposition representatives focused on a Syrian-led transition process; and second, in parallel, to determine the requirements and modalities of a nationwide ceasefire. In this vein, the Secretary-General welcomed the meeting convened in Riyadh from 9 to 11 December 2015 that, as he said, brought together a broad spectrum of the Syrian opposition. In reference to the International Syria Support Group meeting held on 18 December, the Secretary-General said he urged the meeting participants to apply the necessary pressure on the Syrian parties to immediately implement the following four confidence-building measures: (a) stop the indiscriminate use of weapons against civilians, including barrel bombs, which had continued despite the Syrian Government's pledge to refrain from such assaults; (b) allow unconditional and unimpeded access for aid convoys; (c) halt attacks on medical and educational facilities and lift all restrictions on medical and surgical supplies from humanitarian convoys; and, (d) release all detainees.

Members of the Council noted their support for the political process laid out in resolution 2254 (2015); support for the Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura; the urgency to stop the killing in the Syrian Arab Republic, including through the indiscriminate use of weapons; the need to defeat terrorism; the need for immediate humanitarian measures aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people; and the need for the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) by all the parties concerned.

On 21 December, the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Kyung-wha Kang, and the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, briefed the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the broader refugee crisis caused by the conflict. The briefing was followed by informal consultations.

The Assistant Secretary-General underscored continued violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the Syrian Arab Republic. She highlighted the increased fighting on the ground and airstrikes in the northern part of the country, and noted that civilian structures had been hit and scores of civilian deaths and injuries were reported on almost a daily basis. The former High Commissioner reported that the Syrian Arab Republic was suffering tremendous "brain drain" and warned of the "disastrous consequences" for reconstruction. He warned that the flight of Syrians would intensify if there were no prospect for a solution. He underscored the need for a "new deal" between the international community and the Syrian Arab Republic's neighbours, focusing on education, access to the labour market, and protection against poverty; and gave support to the idea of a "vast" resettlement programme.

Council members cautioned that the international community was not paying enough attention to the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and that the military actions on the ground were at odds with efforts towards a political solution. Council members expressed concern over disruptions in humanitarian access and some of them underscored the importance of the Council's role in

working to address the humanitarian situation. Members also focused on the continuing violations of international humanitarian law in the course of the conflict.

Some members said progress on the political track could not be achieved if civilians remain targets, humanitarian access is denied and violations of international humanitarian law persist, and others argued that the political process should not be conditioned by anything, including by issues of a humanitarian nature. Members emphasized the need for a Syrian-led political settlement and a visible role for the United Nations to play on the political process.

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

On 17 December, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations briefed the Security Council in informal consultations on challenges facing the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). He reported that security conditions prevented UNDOF from returning to vacated positions in the area of separation for the foreseeable future, as intense fighting between the Syrian Government and opposition forces persists, but that the UNDOF presence in the Golan Heights and its role as a liaison between Israel and Syria helped keep tensions under control.

Council members offered continued support for the UNDOF mission and emphasized that there should be no military forces in the area of separation other than UNDOF. Most Council members emphasized that both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic should continue to respect the terms of the Disengagement Agreement.

On 22 December, the Security Council adopted resolution 2257 (2015), by which it extended the mandate of UNDOF for six months. The Council also addressed the provision of additional equipment and technology to UNDOF, as well as the need for new crossing procedures for UNDOF personnel.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

In his briefing to the Security Council on 16 December, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, reported that violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel continued. He reiterated the United Nations firm condemnation of all terrorist attacks, called upon all leaders to end incitement and cautioned that the current circumstances should not become the "new normal". The Assistant Secretary-General aired concerns on a range of issues that he said undermined the prospects for ending violence and rebuilding trust; they included movement restrictions, punitive demolitions and settlement activity by Israel. Regarding Gaza, the Assistant Secretary-General said that reconstruction was occurring, although the rebuilding of homes and neighbourhoods that were completely destroyed during the 2014 hostilities remained slow. He emphasized that a political horizon was needed to empower those who would emphasize reason and restraint instead of extremism on both sides. Israeli statements committing to a two-State solution, he said, needed to be followed by actions demonstrating the sincerity of that commitment, while Palestinians must work to achieve unity. Turning to Lebanon, the Assistant Secretary-General reiterated the United Nations support for the leadership of Prime Minister Tammam Salam and, while noting Lebanon's resiliency in the face of serious challenges emanating from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, stressed the importance of electing a president without delay.

Yemen

On 22 December, the Council held a public briefing on Yemen. The Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, briefed the Council on the outcome

of political talks in Switzerland that concluded on 20 December, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, delivered his first briefing to the Council on Yemen. The Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator also provided an update on the country's humanitarian challenges.

The Special Envoy described the recent talks as "constructive" and said they provided a "solid foundation" for further talks to begin on 14 January. While noting that the talks came during a "very bleak period" for Yemen, he recognized the parties for their willingness to agree to a cessation of hostilities and set up a de-escalation and coordination committee to minimize violations. He reported progress in other areas during the talks in Switzerland, including a discussion about overcoming obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the country and the "first large shipment of aid to arrive [at Taiz] in almost three months". The parties also reached a "common understanding of a negotiating framework" to guide the next round of discussions. The High Commissioner warned that "the conditions of life have become untenable for the vast majority of people in Yemen" and reported an "intensification" of human rights violations. After welcoming the agreement reached by the parties to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the Assistant Secretary-General warned that 200,000 civilians in Taiz "have been effectively cut off from medical assistance". She reported that food imports had reached pre-crisis levels, but that fuel imports were still 50 per cent lower and commodity prices remained high, owing in large part to damaged road and port infrastructure.

Council members reiterated their desire for a robust humanitarian response with unhindered access throughout the country, hopes for a longer-lasting ceasefire and support for a political solution. Members called upon the Houthis to improve access to Taiz, adding that assistance delivered to the city during talks must be distributed to civilians, and stressed the need to quickly implement the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism. Members also emphasized that the parties to the conflict must be prepared to make difficult compromises and show flexibility to help bring the conflict to an end, while offering support for a ceasefire in Yemen.

Asia

The situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 10 December, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Council adopted the provisional agenda by 9 votes in favour to 4 against, with 2 abstentions. The Under-Secretary-General noted areas where the United Nations had attempted to improve relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea over the past year but said efforts to engage the Government to improve the human rights situation must go hand in hand with efforts to hold the perpetrators of crimes accountable. The High Commissioner reported that gross human rights violations continued in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He stressed his belief that it was essential for the Security Council to take action by referring the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the International Criminal Court, given the scale and extreme gravity of the allegations.

Some Council members argued that the Council was not the appropriate forum to address human rights, that the issue posed no threat to international peace and security and accused the Council of politicizing the issue and practising a double

standard. Others countered that in its report the Commission of Inquiry itself had said that the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea "does not have any parallel in the contemporary world," and that, given the continued violations, the Council should continue its consideration of the item (see S/PV.7575).

Islamic Republic of Iran

On 15 December, the Permanent Representative of Spain, Román Oyarzun Marchesi, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), briefed the Security Council on the Committee's activities over the previous 90 days. This was the second such briefing since the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was announced on 14 July and the Security Council adopted resolution 2231 (2015) endorsing the Plan of Action on 20 July.

Council members commended the negotiations leading to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and expressed hope that all member States would faithfully implement resolution 2231 (2015), in which the Council endorsed the Plan of Action. Several delegations noted that the implementation of the Plan of Action would ultimately determine its success, and urged Member States to fully prepare for "Implementation Day". A majority of Council members urged the Islamic Republic of Iran to refrain from further ballistic-missile launches, with some members noting that the Emad missile had nuclear capabilities. Some Council members reaffirmed countries' right to pursue nuclear research for strictly peaceful purposes, in line with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but a few members expressed disappointment with what they said was a lack of progress on nuclear disarmament, also a Treaty requirement.

Thematic issues

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

On 22 December, the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), the Permanent Representative of Spain, Ambassador Roman Oyarzun, briefed the Council. He said that there was progress in the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) but that there were issues that required attention. He informed the Council that the Committee was also making headway on the comprehensive review of the resolution, which will culminate late in 2016, possibly with a new resolution. He provided an account of the Committee's work, especially on its efforts in terms of monitoring the status of implementation of the resolution, matchmaking between assistance requests and availability, furthering cooperation with international organizations, and advancing transparency and outreach initiatives.

Most Council members underscored the recent terrorist attacks around the world as evidence of the importance of resolution 1540 (2004) and reiterated the urgent need to prevent terrorists from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction. Several members lauded the collaborative approach of the Committee, referred to the resolution as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, and praised the fact that a high number of Member States — 90 per cent so far — had submitted reports outlining how they have implemented the resolution. Almost all Council members emphasized the need to improve the assistance by the Committee so that more Member States could fully implement the resolution. Most Council members welcomed the recent completion of an assessment by the Committee's Group of Experts of the status of implementation by States Members, called for a robust comprehensive review and emphasized the need for universal reporting.

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

On 9 December, the Council held its semi-annual meeting on the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The Presidents and Prosecutors of each institution briefed the Council on the annual reports of the two Tribunals (S/2015/577 and S/2015/585), the letters from the Tribunals' Presidents (S/2015/874 and S/2015/884), and the letters from the President of the International Residual Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (S/2015/883 and S/2015/896).

In his first appearance before the Council since becoming President of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Judge Carmel Agius briefed the Council on the many challenges remaining for closing the Court by its 2017 target. He assured Council members that despite the serious challenges the Tribunal was facing, he was committed to working with the Security Council to ensure its efficient and orderly closure by the end of 2017. Judge Agius briefed the Council on the progress of the Tribunal in completing its work, including four ongoing trials, and reported on challenges and delays, including on decisions related to the health of the accused and their fitness to stand trial, and staff attrition and morale. He reported setbacks regarding the Karadžić and the Šešelj trials, which would not be decided by the end of 2015, as had been forecast. The Mladić trial and the appeals in *Prosecutor v. Mićo Stanišić and Stojan Župljanin* and *Prosecutor v. Jadranko Prlić et al.* remained on target.

Judge Vagn Joensen, during his final appearance before the Security Council as President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, reported that, with the completion of the final case, the Tribunal would formally close on 31 December 2015 and only liquidation activities would continue into 2016. The remaining functions would be handed over by the Tribunal to the residual mechanism. On outstanding issues, he reported that the International Organization for Migration had completed and submitted a draft assessment study to the Government of Rwanda that identified options for reparations for victims and survivors.

The President of the International Residual Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, Theodor Meron, reported that the Mechanism was increasingly standing on its own as a separate institution and that, over the past six months, work on the legal and regulatory framework of the Mechanism had progressed. He cited ongoing issues on the Mechanism's agenda, including fugitive-tracking activities, which required the involvement and commitment of Member States to ensure that the fugitives were apprehended, and the resettlement of the small number of persons acquitted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or who had completed the sentences imposed by that Tribunal.

The Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Serge Brammertz, briefed the Council on the progress by the Office of the Prosecutor in completing its work on the Tribunal's final trials and appeals. He reported that the office was awaiting the issuance of trial judgments in the trials of Karadžić and Šešelj. On the Mladić case, they remained focused on responding to the evidence presented by the defence and, in the Hadžić case, were exploring all reasonable options towards completing the trial. Regarding appeals, during the reporting period the Prosecutor's office had presented oral arguments in the Stanišić and Simatović case and would shortly be presenting its oral arguments in the Stanišić and Župljanin case. Brammertz continued that the Prlić et al. appeal was awaiting the scheduling of the oral arguments. Brammertz also briefed the Council on the progress in national war crimes cases in the region, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. He said attrition remained a persistent challenge,

though the office continued its downsizing, and had removed 50 per cent of posts since January 2014. He said the Tribunal would continue downsizing staff and significantly reducing expenditures.

A briefing from the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Hassan Bubacar Jallow followed. He reported that the Mechanism had taken over the functions of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and continued to do so for the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. He urged Member States to cooperate with the Mechanism to secure the arrest and trial of the remaining eight fugitives.

Council members thanked the Prosecutors and Presidents for their briefings, with the majority of members complimenting the work of the Tribunals and recognizing the contributions they have made to the body of international criminal law, especially in the areas of genocide and sexual and gender-based violence. Concern about the ongoing delays in the judicial proceedings of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (especially in the Šešelj case) was also expressed. Members especially welcomed the success of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in carrying out its completion strategy over the year, despite the year-long delay.

The representatives of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda then delivered statements under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. The representative of Croatia stressed that his country was still waiting for the verdicts in certain pivotal cases and stated that the slow pace of the proceedings remained a serious problem. He reiterated the importance of completing the remaining trials in the Šešelj, Hadžić, Mladić and Karadžić cases, and noted the continued suspension of proceedings in the Goran Hadžić case and the "toxic impact" of the temporary release of the Šešelj case. The representative of Serbia stated that Serbia cooperated with the Tribunal, in particular in the cases of Goran Hadžić and Vojislav Šešelj, and reported that war crimes proceedings in Serbia were ongoing and proceeding in parallel with the Tribunal's completion strategy. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina cited continued cooperation with the Tribunal and its implementation of all decisions and rulings. He emphasized the importance of the successful completion of the work of the Tribunal and encouraged it to meet the targets of its completion strategy. Bosnia and Herzegovina also remains committed to strengthening its national justice systems at all levels in order to bring to justice persons responsible for atrocity crimes.

The representative of Rwanda marked "the end of the era" with the completion of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. She stressed that the Tribunal had not only contributed to the fight against impunity for mass atrocities, but had also produced a substantial body of jurisprudence, including definitions of the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, as well as forms of responsibility, and established that the genocide that occurred in Rwanda was against the Tutsi as a group, and ruled that acts of rape and sexual violence constitute crimes of genocide if committed with the intent to destroy the targeted group, thereby contributing to post-genocide reconciliation and healing in Rwanda.

On 22 December, the Council, by resolution 2256 (2015), extended the terms of the 17 permanent and ad litem judges of the Trial Chambers and Appeals Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and called upon the court to review its projected case completion dates with a view towards shortening them as appropriate and to prevent any additional delays. The Council noted the conclusion of its review of the progress of work of the Mechanism, including in completing its functions, during its initial period, pursuant to resolution

1966 (2010). The Mechanism's operation was correspondingly extended for a subsequent period of two years. The Council also requested that the Office of Internal Oversight Services evaluate the methods and work of the Tribunal. One delegation regretted the delays and lack of actionable decisions.

Maintenance of international peace and security: trafficking in persons in situations of conflict

On 16 December, the United States hosted a meeting on the theme "Trafficking in persons in situations of conflict". The event marked the first time the Security Council had held a thematic meeting solely on the topic of human trafficking in conflict areas. The meeting explored how human trafficking by terrorists and armed groups manifests itself in conflict, as well as how to identify and highlight actions the Security Council, the United Nations system, and the broader United Nations membership could take to address this crisis and its impact on peace and security. Present at the meeting were representatives from nearly 100 Member States and dozens of non-governmental organizations. Speakers at the meeting included the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Yury Fedotov, the Chief Executive Officer of the Freedom Fund, Nick Grono, and Nadia Murad Basee Taha, a 21-year-old Yazidi survivor of human trafficking by ISIL. The Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/25) to support efforts to eliminate trafficking in persons in situations of conflict. In the statement, the Council condemned in the strongest terms the actions of ISIL, the Lord's Resistance Army, Boko Haram, and other terrorist and armed groups in trafficking human beings for the purpose of sexual slavery, sexual exploitation and forced labour.

The Deputy Secretary-General urged Member States for more robust implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol), as well as the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The Deputy Secretary-General also stressed that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addressed the problem of human trafficking. The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime emphasized the important work of the Office and of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. The Chief Executive Officer of the Freedom Fund described the deepening nexus between human trafficking and conflict. He called upon the Secretary-General to appoint a time-bound special envoy to help to end modern slavery, create global partnerships and promulgate guidance on ridding supply chains of forced labour and trafficking.

Nadia Murad Basee Taha, a survivor of the massacre in Kojo, Iraq, in 2014, provided a vivid account of the ISIL attack on Kojo and her subsequent trauma. She called upon the United Nations and its Member States to bring back the 3,400 women and children still in ISIL captivity, open a case against ISIL in the International Criminal Court, provide international protection for Yazidi-occupied areas in northern Iraq, open borders for Yazidi refugees, establish an international fund to compensate victims of ISIL, and bring an end to ISIL.

Council members commended Nadia Murad Basee Taha for her remarks and bravery. Many made specific proposals on how to strengthen the Council's role in stopping trafficking, including sanctions, strengthening the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol, enhanced monitoring of trafficking in areas of conflict, specialized training for peacekeeping forces, reintegration programmes, and psychological, social and medical assistance. Various Member States also referred to their domestic efforts to address human trafficking.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

On 31 December, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/26) concerning strengthening cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the Secretariat and the Security Council. The Council called for better triangular cooperation between the Secretariat, the Security Council, and troop- and police-contributing countries, while recognizing the existing mechanisms, and called for all three partners to take advantage of existing mechanisms by participating fully. It also acknowledged the importance of effective consultations among the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat, which "must extend beyond the issue of mandates of operations, and to areas such as safety and security of peacekeepers, strategic force generation, gender, conduct and discipline, including allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, implementation of protection of civilian mandates, capability, performance, equipment and national caveats". The statement welcomed the establishment of the Strategic Force Generation and Capability Planning Cell.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 17 December, the United States Secretary of the Treasury, Jacob J. Lew, chaired a special meeting of the Security Council on combatting ISIL finance and all forms of terrorist financing. For the first time in the 70-year history of the Security Council, members were represented by their finance ministers — a step that underscored the importance of the financial effort to address the threat posed by terrorist organizations, including ISIL. Angola, Chile, France, Jordan, Spain and the United Kingdom participated at the minister or vice-minister level. The Secretary-General and the President of the Financial Action Task Force, the international standard-setting body on countering terrorist financing, also spoke at the meeting. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2253 (2015), which improves the international community's ability to disrupt ISIL financing and to counter the financing of terrorism more broadly.

The United States Secretary of the Treasury stated that isolating ISIL from the international financial system was an integral part of the United States strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL and the goal of the meeting was to bolster international efforts to further disrupt ISIL sources of revenue.

Council members focused on urgent steps needed to deny ISIL access to funds and other forms of support, limit what ISIL could do with its revenue and impose sanctions on ISIL supporters and financial facilitators to isolate them from the international financial system. Members focused on efforts to ensure that the international community was implementing global standards on countering the financing of terrorism. They emphasized the importance of sharing information on ISIL financing and committed themselves to making the international financial system a hostile environment for ISIL. Ministers also focused on means to more effectively disrupt terrorist financing more broadly, beyond ISIL, including the United Nations and other multilateral legal and regulatory frameworks, such as the international standards of the Financial Action Task Force.

The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2253 (2015) to review the United Nations counterterrorism sanctions and adapt these measures to the evolving terrorist threat. The key provisions of the resolution include recognizing the increasing prominence of ISIL as a global threat; establishing "association with ISIL" as a new stand-alone criterion for imposing new sanctions designations; calling upon countries to criminalize financial transactions related to terrorism, including all transactions with individual terrorists and terrorist groups; providing guidance on stopping ISIL oil smuggling, extortion and taxation, robbery,

kidnapping for ransom, foreign donations, trade in antiquities and human trafficking.

Subsidiary bodies

On 17 December, the Council heard year-end briefings from the respective Chairs of the Committees on the following thematic issues and regional situations: peacekeeping operations, counterterrorism, international tribunals, the Central African Republic, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan and Guinea-Bissau.

The Permanent Representative of Chad, Ambassador Mahamat Zene Cherif, Chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, expressed the view that it would be essential to strengthen partnerships with regional and subregional organizations by availing them of the means necessary to maintain or enforce peace in their respective regions. He also noted the increased security risks facing peacekeepers and encouraged the Council to strengthen the capacities of troop-contributing countries and to increase communication between the Council, troop-contributing countries, and the Secretariat.

The Permanent Representative of Jordan, Ambassador Dina Kawar, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) concerning Liberia, and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, briefed the Council on the work of the two committees. Regarding Liberia, she noted that resolution 2237 (2015) terminated the travel and financial bans established in resolutions 1521 (2003) and 1532 (2004). She noted Liberia's progress in both properly managing arms and ammunitions and effectively monitoring and managing the regions bordering Côte d'Ivoire. She said the Committee had identified remaining challenges and had worked on solutions to overcome them. Regarding the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), she was encouraged by the progress of the military in North Kivu and the arrest of a sanctioned leader in the United Republic of Tanzania, but remained concerned about the number of armed rebels, natural-resource trafficking, lack of a nation-wide government presence and limited space for peacebuilding and national dialogue.

The Permanent Representative of Lithuania, Ambassador Raimonda Murmokaitė, briefed the Council as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), concerning Yemen. The Chair stressed that effective implementation of sanctions required greater communication between Council and non-members of the Council.

The Permanent Representative of Chile, Ambassador Cristian Barros Melet, briefed the Council as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan, and the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals. He discussed his visit to Côte d'Ivoire and reported that the sanctions list had shrunk, the diamond embargo had been lifted and the arms embargo had been substantially modified. On South Sudan, he reported that the nine-month-old Committee had encountered difficulties negotiating its guidelines, but had met with several national and international entities and agreed to add six names to the sanctions list. Finally, on international tribunals, he noted that the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda had closed and that the Residual Mechanism had conducted its first review.

The Permanent Representative of Nigeria, Ambassador Joy Ogwu, briefed the Council as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau, and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1518 (2003), concerning Iraq. She reported that the sanctions had been positively affecting Guinea-Bissau's peace, stability, and development, and that monitoring would continue to be necessary.